

April 25, 2009

HULL SKEDADDLES TO 4-LENGTH SCORE IN GRADE 3 DERBY TRIAL STAKES, EASILY HANDLES A WIDE TRIP, RAISE IN CLASS IN CHURCHILL DOWNS WIN, HOLY BULL 3-YEAR-OLD NOW UNBEATEN IN 3 STARTS FOR A PARTNERSHIP



Hull exceeded expectations today when he dominated the Grade 3 Derby Trial Stakes at Churchill Downs, pressing the pace from the outside while extremely wide and drawing off to triumph by 4 lengths as the 7 to 3 third choice in a field of 8 for trainer Dale Romans and owners Team Valor International, Heiligbrodt Racing Stable and Gary Barber.

A strong wind was at the runners' backs, as they flew down the backstretch while recording fractions of :21.78 and :44.29. Hull was allowed to race close up, as he attended the pace 3 wide and exerted pressure on the speed horses. The colt lost considerable ground around the turn and lost some more ground and no little momentum when curving into the homestretch after the pacesetters completed the three-quarters in 1:09.62.



Once straightened out in the lane, Hull was asked to quicken by Miguel Mena, who receive an instant response to his question, as the dark-coasted youngster both lengthened and increased the tempo of his stride to leave his field in the dust.

Halfway down the lane, Hull began to wander to his right. Mena quickly straighted him out, asked him to pick up the momentum again, and this time the colt re-broke and spurted clear to win straight by an ever-widening margin.

"You see what he did there?" Mena said. "Only a good horse can do that. You guys see what he did and you understand that

this is a good horse. But believe me when I tell you, you have no idea what it feels like to ride a horse like this. He is a very, very special horse. You will see what I mean. This horse, he is a monster."

Such was the air of authority with which the Team Valor colorbearer dismantled the field that a gaggle of reporters, naturally looking to create some further news for their publications, immediately pressed Romans to find out if he planned to run the Holy Bull colt next in the Preakness Stakes.

Romans (right) told the hacks just what they wanted to hear, leaving the door ajar for a tilt in the second leg of the Triple Crown.

Later, when Romans celebrated in the Directors' Room with owners Bill and Corrine Heiligbrodt and Team Valor principal Barry Irwin, he said "Hey, a little free publicity cannot hurt, right?"



The Preakness is probably not really in the cards for the exciting Kentucky-bred colt, who kept his unbeaten record unsullied by making the one-turn Grade 3 fixture his third successive win, following a sensationally fast maiden score at Fair Grounds and an even easier and lengthier win at Turfway Park. Hull now has won his 3 races by a combined total of 16 lengths.

Irwin said "The probability of us deciding to run Hull in the Preakness is not high. It would mean giving him his first two-turn start in one of the most difficult races to win on the entire calendar, one that is contested by battle-tested and seasoned runners at the peak of their fitness.

"We are pretty sure that Hull has the talent to compete in the Preakness, but subjecting him to this type of challenge without a previous race around two turns may be foolhardy.

"This colt has his entire career ahead of him, he is obviously super talented and he is learning all the time. But he is far from the finished article. You saw him drift in the stretch out of greenness today. He is not yet ready to tackle Classic horses around two turns. There is plenty of time for that later.

"None of us are into running a horse in a big race for the sake of being in it. We will spot this colt where he can continue to make progress."

From the *Louisville Courier Journal* comes the following:

Hull wins Derby Trial, Preakness could be next for colt

by Jason Frakes



Jockey Mena extremely high on young Hull.

Churchill Downs-based trainer Dale Romans lost his last shot at a 2009 Kentucky Derby contender when Hull was scratched from last week's Lexington Stakes.

That decision led Hull to yesterday's Derby Trial on opening day at Churchill Downs, and the Holy Bull colt might have established himself as a top-flight shooter for the Preakness on May 16.

Hull stalked brutal early fractions and drew clear through the stretch to capture the \$112,000, Grade III Trial and improve to 3 for 3.

"The Preakness is definitely a possibility, but we'll see how the Derby shakes out and who comes out of it," said Romans, who captured his 20th stakes victory at Churchill. "I think he's as good as anybody around right now."

With Miguel Mena riding, Hull covered 7½ furlongs in 1:30.21 and paid \$8.80 as the third betting choice in a field of eight. Kensei was four lengths back in second, and Checklist was another 1¾ lengths back in third.

Romans said Hull -- purchased for \$82,000 last May -- battled shin issues that kept him from racing as a 2-year-old. He won his February debut at the Fair Grounds by 4¼ lengths and followed that with a 7¾-length victory in an optional-claiming race on April 2 at Turfway Park.

Hull was entered in last Saturday's Lexington Stakes at Keeneland as a possible Kentucky Derby prep but was scratched after drawing the outside post in a field of 12.

"The post position was terrible, and we knew (the Derby Trial) could springboard us into the Preakness," Romans said.

Hull broke from the No. 7 post yesterday and raced three-wide off the quick pace set by Checklist and 9-5 favorite Silver City (fractions of 21.78 and 44.29 seconds).

Mena said he was somewhat concerned about how fast the leaders were going.

"But the horse just felt really comfortable and happy and you don't want to take him back when he's going good," Mena said.

Hull drew clear entering the stretch and -- despite what Romans termed "goofing around a bit" -- was never threatened chasing the wire.

Silver City, who was fifth in the March 14 Rebel Stakes, also finished fifth yesterday.

Hull co-owner Bill Heiligbrodt has trained two Kentucky Derby horses -- Southern Rhythm (1994) and Blow Out (1996) both finished seventh -- but he said Hull might be his most special horse.

The \$67,357 payday boosted Hull's earnings to \$107,800.

"How many horses have I had in my life?" Heiligbrodt said. "I haven't had one that had this kind of tactical speed. And we haven't gotten to the bottom of it yet. ... He has that extra touch where he just keeps on going for some reason."

To see video clip and read story from *Daily Racing Form* click [here](#).

To read story and quotes from Churchill Downs click [here](#).

Owner Profiles:

Barry Irwin is the owner of Team Valor International racing stable headquartered in Versailles, Kentucky. Hull became stakes winner 100 for a racing partnership formed by Irwin since 1987. Among the Grade 1 winners he has raced with The Heiligbrodts are Golden Ballet and Cashier's Dream. Other Grade 1 winners for Irwin include Captain Bodgit, The Deputy, Ipi Tombe, Sweet Stream, Star of Cozzene, Prized, Visionaire, Unbridled Belle and Iridescence.

Bill and Corrine Heiligbrodt are the owners of Heiligbrodt Racing Stable in Houston, Texas. They annually rank among the leading owners in the United States, specializing in 2-year-olds. Among the Graded stakes winners they have owned by Barry Irwin are Cashier's Dream, who still holds the track record for 5 ½ furlongs at Churchill Downs, and Golden Ballet, one of the few fillies to sweep the trio of stakes for 3-year-olds at Santa Anita, including the Grade 1 Santa Anita Oaks. Among their many Graded stakes winners was the brilliant sprinter Posse.

Gary Barber is co-chairman, CEO and founder of Spyglass Entertainment Group in Westwood, California. He was the record-breaking owner of winners last summer at Del Mar racetrack. Among the Grade 1 winners raced in partnership with Barry Irwin have been Santa Anita Derby winner The Deputy; Santa Anita Oaks winner Golden Ballet, Woodbine Mile winner Becrux, Prix Vermeille winner Sweet Stream and Daily News 2000 Stakes winner Russian Sage.